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FM AMEMBASSY ASTANA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6207
INFO RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE 2790
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE IMMEDIATE 2054
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE
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RHMFISS/CDR USTRANSCOM SCOTT AFB IL IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1479
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1361
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 1922
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1292
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 0947
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1990

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SIPDIS

STATE FOR D, P, S/P, ISN, SCA/FO, SCA/CEN, EUR/RUS, DRL
NSC FOR MCFAUL, DONNELLY
FROM THE AMBASSADOR

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KNNP](#) [OSCE](#) [AF](#) [RS](#) [KZ](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: KEEPING PERSPECTIVE

REF: A. ASTANA 1512

[1](#)B. ASTANA1494

[1](#)C. ASTANA 1487

[1](#)D. ASTANA 1470

[1](#)E. ASTANA 1429

Classified By: Ambassador Richard E. Hoagland: 1.4 (B), (D)

[1](#)1. (C) With the Yevgeniy Zhovtis case -- Zhovtis is the internationally renowned human rights advocate whose most unfortunate auto accident some in the government of Kazakhstan appear to be exploiting -- we can all agree that Kazakhstan has stepped on its tail in a most appalling and old-guard KGB way. No one disputes that. But I would urge that we keep our eye fixed on our long-term national interests (reftel E).

[1](#)2. (S) President Nursultan Nazarbayev is authoritarian, even if generally progressive. He is a product of his traditional culture, and apparently has been led to believe Zhovtis overtly challenged his position as "pater familias" of the nation of Kazakhstan by "seeking protection by the Western critics of Kazakhstan" after his auto accident. The Committee for National Security (KNB, ex-KGB) and other Soviet-era dinosaurs, always looking for a way to turn Nazarbayev away from the West, appear to have seized on Zhovtis' auto accident as a godsend.

[1](#)3. (S) I am working hard and urgently at very high levels here in Kazakhstan to communicate Washington's universally sharp displeasure with this disappointing turn of events about Zhovtis, and to make clear the need for the highest level of Kazakhstan's leadership to take specific, concrete steps to mitigate the very real damage that has occurred. I will tell you honestly that I cannot predict with confidence at this time if they will "do the right thing," even though I have laid out what needs to be done. After a one-on-one on September 10 with State Secretary and Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev (reftel A), I am guardedly optimistic that this case might eventually play out in a positive way.

14. (S) While some argue that Uzbekistan is key to USTRANSCOM's Northern Distribution Network (NDN) to supply U.S. and International Security Assistance Force troops in Afghanistan -- and I fully agree -- the NDN cannot succeed without Kazakhstan (the geographic size of all of Western Europe), which straddles the land, sea, and air routes between Russia and Afghanistan. Kazakhstan -- meaning President Nazarbayev -- is leaning forward to do more with us for Afghanistan, but wants to hear from us what we want. Nazarbayev's ill-defined offer to host for us a "logistics base," as he called it, is clearly a new opening and requires that we respond as quickly as possible.

15. (S) We have enormously important, and critically sensitive, non-proliferation of weapons-of-mass-destruction initiatives under way in Kazakhstan. We now believe -- after much persistent urging -- that we have begun to breach the bureaucratic dams that were preventing significant forward movement on these highly sensitive initiatives, including achieving the various Government of Kazakhstan decrees for VAT exemptions and to fund the transport for proper and safe disposal of enough highly-enriched uranium/plutonium to make hundreds of nuclear weapons. President Nazarbayev, for all his considerable flaws, sees himself as one of the fundamental U.S. partners in President Obama's historic goal to achieve global nuclear security.

16. (C) With Kazakhstan about to assume the OSCE chairmanship for 2010 -- with Russia breathing hard and hot down

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Kazakhstan's neck, especially to call for a new European Security Treaty -- we have an historic opportunity to work successfully with a key post-Soviet state. When former Foreign Minister Marat Tazhin met with Secretary Clinton in Washington on May 5, he said explicitly President Nazarbayev wants the equivalent of a "hot line" to coordinate U.S. and Kazakhstani views on OSCE. That might have been lost in the normal flow of memcons, but a senior member of Kazakhstan's foreign ministry reminded me of this "unfulfilled understanding" on September 10. Of course, we will not establish a physical "hot line," but I would recommend that we designate a specific, DAS-level point-person for this purpose. The positive will for closest cooperation on OSCE exists in Astana. We need to respond to it -- and fully exploit it to our advantage.

17. (C) And then there's Russia. Even if President Obama -- through hard-eyed pragmatism -- has achieved the best U.S.-Russia relationship in nearly a decade, Russia is still Putin's Russia. Nazarbayev has historically good relations with Putin and, now, Medvedev; however, he does not slavishly agree to everything Moscow asks. A strong U.S. relationship with Kazakhstan, with Nazarbayev, would complement our reset with Russia, and could prove useful from time to time.

18. (C) I want to suggest, based on my 16 years of experience in Central Asia, that we keep our eye fixed on our long-term national interests and national security goals. As Secretary Clinton so eloquently said during her Senate Foreign Relations Committee confirmation hearing, "President Obama and I believe that foreign policy must be based on a marriage of principles and pragmatism, not rigid ideology, on facts and evidence, not emotion or prejudice." It seems to me, here on the other side of the world managing the U.S.-Kazakhstan bilateral relationship, to be a time for pragmatism.

HOAGLAND